



DRIVE DEVELOPING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CAPACITIES IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

RISS regulation, Strategy, Job description & Action plan

European University of Tirana

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EUT Vision: To be a leading university in knowledge enhancement in Albanian society, a centre of excellence in the academic education of our students, a centre of specialized expertise in socio-political, economic, law, education, and information technology fields of study in Albania, influential in the region and beyond, as well as a centre of excellence for scientific research in all fields of study it has advantage¹.

1. Introduction

The European University of Tirana (EUT) was founded in 2006, by a group of lecturers (Albanian and foreign), journalists, experienced managers, in both the public and private sector of higher education. The aim was to both respond to the market demands, as well as to establish a high-quality institution that would offer an alternative model of education of the highest standards, different from the existing traditional models. Very soon EUT became one of the most prominent private universities in Albania, in terms of the number of students, quality of academic staff employed, and its active engagement in the public debate.

As regards its main priorities, EUT is highly committed in:

- *Teaching and learning:* provide students with high-quality education, to enable their successful integration in the labour market and their contribution to the society.
- *Scientific research:* intensify collaboration with other universities, industries, and institutions, in Albania and abroad, to conduct research work that provides researched answers to real-world problems that our society faces, advancing knowledge, innovation and creativity.
- *Staff development and Student life:* continue its tradition of hiring professional staff, with strong research and teaching potential and provide their professional development through staff development trainings, inside and outside the institution. As regards students, EUT intends to increase their participation in decision-making processes, in research and extracurricular activities, as well as their contribution in social business activities, social aid, civil society contribution, and civic engagement, among other things.
- *Quality of services and infrastructure:* EUT shall relocate to a new university campus, that will highly improve the infrastructure required for teaching and research activities. •

¹ Statute of the European University of Tirana, Article 6 “Vision, Mission and Strategic Objective”

International cooperation: EUT aspires to be an important hub and a national and regional reference point for university academic cooperation, scientific research, publication, and the promotion of higher education's developmental and civic values².

EUT participates in university, scientific, and academic cooperation networks and projects with universities in the EU, OECD, and elsewhere, with the aim to contribute to broader and more specific collaboration with universities in the south-eastern European region, particularly those in Kosovo and North Macedonia. EUT provides opportunities for student professional development by enhancing collaborations with other industries and institutions, either through the engagement of external practicing experts in the auditorium or the development of specific internship programs, to facilitate as much as possible student integration into the labour market³.

UET has established a distinct tradition for scientific research and collaborations in research projects with universities and research centres abroad, cooperation projects with industries and institutions in Albania, and engagement of the best Albanian researchers who have settled abroad and/or within the country, all with the goal of providing solutions to real-world problems that our society faces. Academic freedom and responsibility, as well as the depth of research and interdisciplinarity, are all geared toward advancing knowledge, innovation, and creativity.

2. EUT Research Strategy, Objectives and Structure

In line with its vision and strategic plan, the institution has designed and implements EUT Research Strategy, which states the aim of EUT to consolidate its identity as the main centre of knowledge production in Albania and to further its transformation from an institution of higher education focused almost exclusively on teaching to an elite research entity whose academic output is respected and contributes to the improvement of teaching and student experience.

Through scientific research EUT aims to:

- Achieve and consolidate a recognition, regarding its teaching practices and research output, as one of the best universities in Albania and the Western Balkan region.
- Aid in the advancement of knowledge and in the perfection of professional practice with the goal of impacting social and economic development through knowledge transfer beyond the academic community towards public and private institutions as well as interest groups.

² European University of Tirana Strategic Plan 2021-2025

³ European University of Tirana Strategic Plan 2021-2025

- Further perfect teaching and academic development at all levels so that students can experience a truly challenging and simultaneously welcoming academic environment.
- Create a stimulating research environment for both students and academics alike through:
 - The standardisation and internationalisation of academic research.
 - Structuring a coherent system of research and certification for the academic staff.
 - Continuous trainings and periodic certifications for the academic staff regarding their ability to publish original scientific knowledge.
 - The further institutionalisation of the Major Research Projects (GRP) and the research units to increase interdisciplinary research, maximise the use of human resources, and provide quality services to third parties interested in the scientific output provided by EUT⁴.

2.1 The structure of research and development is based on three main pillars:

- Research & Publications – this pillar is composed of Grand Research Projects (Research Units and Individual Research Projects, EUT Press, Academic Journals (one for each Faculty), Albanian Studies Days International Conference and other meetings and forums.
- Training & Certification – EUT organises trainings for research and methodologies based on the experience of the researchers (early, junior and senior).
- Research & Development – EUT has 5 Centres for Research (4 at Faculty level and one at institutional level).

Academic Research and Training/Development at EUT		
Research & Publications	Training and Certification	Research & Development
Grand Research Projects (GRP)	Early Researcher Certificate	Center for Sustainable Development
Research Units (5-7 members)	Junior Researcher Certificate	Center for Methodology and Scientific Research
Individual Research Projects	Senior Researcher Certificate	

⁴ European University of Tirana Research Strategy 2021-2025

Publication Review Board of EUT Press Polis Journal Economicus Journal Medicus Journal Justicia Journal Ingenious Journal ASD Conference Proceedings Philosophical Annuals Dardha Liberal Meetings Winter School of Innovation Public Health Forum Spring School of Leadership	Certificate in Research Methodology	Center for Technology Development and Innovation Center for scientific research in public health Office for Project Development and partnerships;
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2.2 Research Projects

The main Research Program 2021-2025: Market Development: University-Research-State

Grand Research Projects (GRP) represent the main organising principle of research at EUT, are led by senior researchers, and encourage interdisciplinary research.

The projects in which UET conducts and realizes scientific research and innovation are:

- a. The new economic model in Albania
- b. The state and the right to transformation
- c. The role of the individual in the development of Albanian society
- d. The impact of innovation in industry and services.
- e. Challenges and the future in the medical fields

GRPs are the main instrument through which EUT directs and generates scientific research and academic publications. GRPs encourage interdisciplinary research; facilitate the coordination of research and the outreach to third parties interested in acquiring and using the university's

research output. The GRPs are also an important mechanism for internal quality control of the academic output since, among others, they also decide on the papers that are accepted in EUT's yearly conference *Albanian Studies Days* and orient and assist junior research regarding their individual research projects.

Housed under the GRPs, the research units are the main mechanism through which the objectives of the GRPs are materialised through empirical studies, which – simultaneously – fulfil the objectives of the GRPs and are in coherence with the overall goals of the researchers' individual research projects. The research units are also the main instrument, which welcomes and 'houses' incoming doctoral students who undertake research that fits the units' main research objectives and interests. Research units, being attached to the GRPs and incorporating doctoral candidates, develop research projects that cannot be shorter than three years.

This organisational structure enables interdisciplinary research and simultaneously 'orients' EUT researchers towards those areas that are important to EUT and its partners.

2.3 Scientific Journals

The academic journals Polis, Economicus, Medicus, Justicia and Ingenious are the main instruments through which EUT 'communicates' with the outside academic world. EUT aims to transform these journals into the Albanian '**journals of record**' in the field of social sciences, humanities, law, economics and medicine. Within 5 years it is aimed that they be indexed internationally.

2.3.1 Polis, Economicus, Medicus, Justicia and Ingenious Journals serve **1)** to publish original research articles and **2)** to consolidate its emerging research identity.

2.3.2 The journals are published **twice a year**. **The publications are in (1)** English; (2) undergo a rigorous double blind peer review; (3) meet a well-defined structure

2.3.3 Specifically:

- The Journals have dedicated web pages in which its articles are accessible to the research community free of charge.
- The journals undergo a continuous indexing process to increase their credibility, visibility, accessibility and prepare them for evaluation by the ranking services.

2.4 EUT Press

EUT Press is one of the most successful mechanisms through which EUT has enriched academic publications in Albania by translating 'classical' works and publishing original academic research of emerging and established Albanian researchers. Due to the work done by

EUT Press, Albanian research is richer and Albanian students have more opportunities to access and engage with up to date research.

2.5 Scientific Conferences

Albanian Studies Days (ASD) Conference

- 2.5.1 EUT aims to consolidate the ASD as the ‘conference of record’ on developments in the Albanian sphere in the Western Balkans.
- 2.5.2 For ASD to become the most prestigious academic conference in Albania it must be identified as such by the academic community and apply the following standards:
 - The Conference’s working language is English.
 - Poster presentations are not allowed.
 - Conference articles are submitted one week before the conference and uploaded onto the ASD webpage accessible to all conference participants.
- 2.5.3 ASD has a dedicated web page in which all the conference papers are uploaded.
- 2.5.4 For every presentation there is a discussant who presents a succinct analytical review of the presentation.
- 2.5.5 The totality of these standards will give ASD a strong scientific profile, which will further EUT’s profile and facilitate the internationalisation of academic research at EUT.

Junior Albanian Studies Days (Junior ASD) Conference is a scientific activity where the best Master thesis of the 5 Faculties of the European University of Tirana are presented.

- The addressed issues are related to the Albanian society, the region and beyond in the fields of economic, human, social, legal, medical, and engineering sciences.
- The conference aims to create a stimulating research environment for students.
- The scientific committee selects the best thesis of each Faculty, and they win the EUT President’ award.

2.6 Communication of the scientific research

UET has created a unique tradition related to the public. A lot of activities that take place periodically and according to a defined annual calendar, aim to bring to the university premises

the city, but also bring the UET out of town, to strengthen dialogue by discussing on topics that are important for the society. Some of the activities that UET aims to develop are:

- 2.5.6 Humanities Annuals, Dardha Liberal Meetings, Winter School of Innovation, Public Health Forum, and Spring School of Leadership. The Humanities Annuals, Dardha Liberal Meetings, Winter School of Innovation, Public Health Forum, and Spring School of Leadership are some of the most important venues through which the university aims to reintroduce philosophy into the public discourse, recreate a space for literature in universities, and enable the spread of liberal thought in Albania where statism and centralism are often the default reactions towards economic and political challenges.
- 2.5.7 These meetings have become national scientific conferences where participants submit full papers, which then can be published in a proceedings book or in special issues in cooperation with scientific journals of UET.

2.7 Training & Certification

- 2.5.8 EUT's academic staff must be able to produce original scientific knowledge and publish it in journals with impact factor. The university expects that its lecturers who have degrees of PhDs and above must publish at least one article every three years in a journal with impact factor ranked by Journal Citation Reports/Scopus.
- 2.5.9 From this perspective, in cooperation with the *Centre for Methodology and Research*, periodic one day or longer trainings (professional development and research) will be offered to increase the staff's ability to undertake independent research that concludes with articles published in journals with impact factor. The trainings will be divided into four categories: (1) Trainings for doctoral candidates; (2) Trainings for Junior Researchers; (3) Trainings for Senior Researchers; (4) Methodological Trainings.

2.5.10 Trainings for Doctoral candidates – Certificate of Beginning

Besides supporting doctoral candidates with a structured PhD programme, which is essential or their methodological training, EUT will offer several 1-day trainings to enable doctoral students' to become successful researchers and contributors to academic life.

- 2.5.11 The trainings are based on material prepared by VITAE (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/about-us/our-history>), which is a company many higher education institutions in the UK rely on. Their materials and trainings will be adopted to the needs and realities of EUT.

Trainings Junior Researchers – Certificate of Junior Research

Moving from being a PhD candidate into a full time researcher is one of the most delicate steps in one's academic career and therefore must be administered very carefully. The first years after the completion of the PhD researchers need special support and continuous trainings from their institutions in order to become integral parts of the academic staff, contribute to their departments, and publish in ranked academic outlets.

To achieve these goals, EUT will offer its junior researchers trainings prepared by VITAE (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/about-us/our-history>), which is a company many higher education institutions in the UK rely on. Their materials and trainings will be adopted to the needs and realities of EUT.

- The engaging researcher
- Enhancing professional effectiveness
- Managing the academic career
- Publish or perish

Trainings for Senior Researchers – How to Lead a Research Team

As leaders of the GRPs and most research units, senior researchers are a key element for the advancement and standardisation of research at EUT and for the supervision and continuous training of junior researchers housed in the research units. Therefore, the training of senior researchers in the latest methods of collaborative research is of special importance for the advancement of academic research at EUT.

Methodological Trainings – Certificate of Methodology

The Achilles' heel for Albanian researchers and those working at EUT is scientific methodology. Most of the publications in Albania do not fulfil the required methodological standards to be published in journals with impact factor. Therefore, the methodological trainings aim to address these limitations and provide the staff the required practical knowledge to be successful researchers. The trainings will be organised as non-formal seminars providing participants new skills for undertaking empirical research in social sciences, humanities, development studies and economics. The goal of the trainings will be to enable the research staff at EUT to rely on a commonly agreed set of rules for explaining social phenomena, critically evaluate the research design of peers, and to be able to write articles, which – at a minimum – can be accepted for review by journals with impact factor.

2.8 Research, Development and Technological Transfer

- Research undertaken at EUT must not only follow international standards, but it must also be part of international research networks in Europe and beyond. From this perspective, the Pashko European Institute, and the Office for Project Development and International Collaboration are key instruments for the further opening of EUT towards third parties in order to gain increasing international funding for research and capacity building. Staff training, staff exchange, and participation in international research networks is the most effective way for the standardisation and internationalisation of research at EUT.



- Besides its intrinsic value, every academic research holds (potentially) an extrinsic value, which can be monetarised in cooperation with third parties interested in it. From this perspective, Center for Sustainable Development, Center for Methodology and Scientific Research, Center for Technology Development and Innovation and Center for scientific research in public health monitored and coordinated by the Vice Rector for Scientific Research will cooperate with the Office for Projects Development and Partnerships, as the latter will serve as a bridge to business so EUT research output can be put to the service of the business community in Albania.
- Lastly, a key component of research and technological transfer is quality assurance and the certification of the scientific output of the academic staff. This process will be undertaken by the Board for the Financing of Academic Research, which evaluates the quality of the academic output, its potential to serve third parties, and to identify the limitations that necessitate staff training.

EUT will rely heavily on the Office for Project Development and International Collaboration for gaining outside financing in order to widen and professionalise its interdisciplinary research portfolio. By becoming part of international consortiums, research networks, and EU-funded research projects EUT can fulfil a number of goals such as internationalisation, increased academic output and improvement of the academic staff's ability to engage in high-quality research publishable in ranked academic outlets.

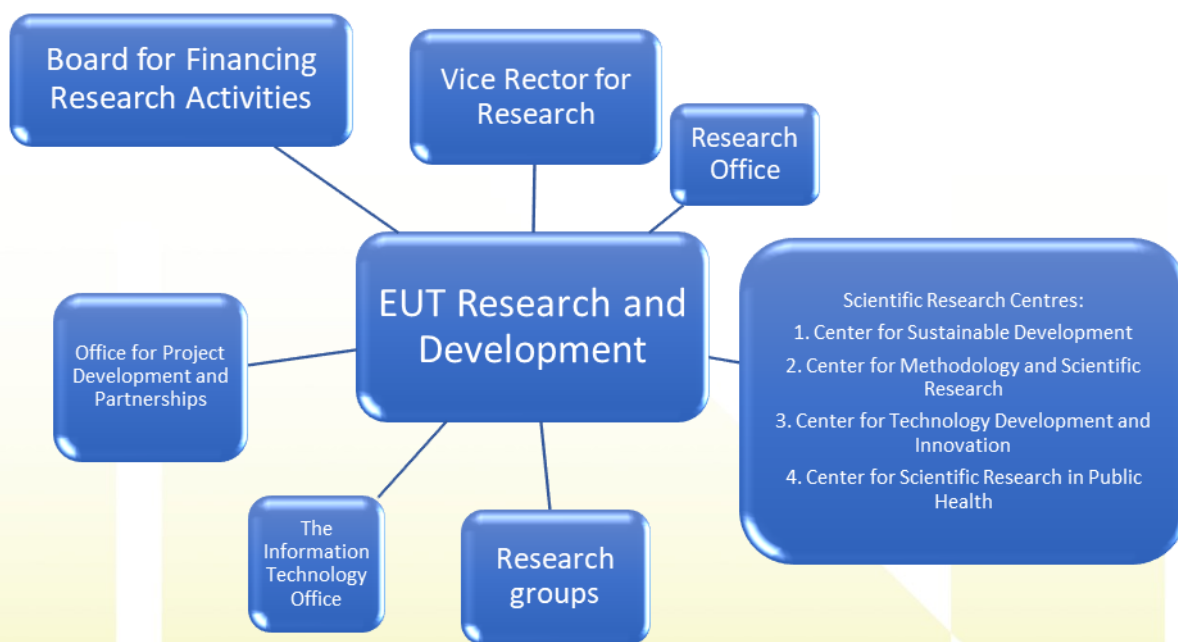
3. Research and Innovation Support Structure (RISS) Regulation

Research and Innovation Support Structure (RISS) is an integral part of Research and Development architecture at the European University of Tirana. Along with the Vice Rector for Scientific Research and the Office for Project Development and Partnerships, the Research Office collaborates with other units, to provide a range of services and support, which aim to:

- support research excellence;
- support research funding growth and diversification;
- support research strategy;
- support a culture of research integrity.

The RISS Regulation seeks to outline these core service offerings and share the key priorities, goals and supporting strategies⁵. This Regulation is aligned with EUT Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and EUT Research Strategy (2021-2025).

EUT Research and Development architecture



⁵ This framework is based on the model of Research Services Framework of Macquaire University <https://www.mq.edu.au/research>

Research Office key priorities, goals and objectives:

Priorities	1. Support research excellence	2. Support research funding growth and diversification	3. Support research strategy	4. Support a culture of research integrity
Goals and objectives	1.1 Promote and Develop Research	2.1 Facilitate coordination and research management	3.1 Enhance performance monitoring and implement potential interventions	4.1 Enhance engagement among research centers and researchers
	1.2 Develop international cooperation among researchers	2.2 Provide collaboration between research centers and labor market.	3.2 Provide data and analysis for Research Strategy review	4.2 Provide Interdisciplinarity and multi profile environment
	1.3 Encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between teaching and research	2.3 Contribute to maximizing competitive funding opportunities	3.3 Support the process of research dissemination	4.3 Encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies

3.1 Resources of founding

- Research activity at EUT is financed through a two-tiered system: internal funding and external donations/grants/funds. EUT allocates its funds selectively to its faculties so that they undertake research that is in line with the university's goal to become a *centre of expertise* for academic research.
- EUT's main internal funding will be directed towards the recruitment of researchers with international prestige, the support of young researchers and those in the middle of their career in order to have a balanced research team that can also engage in high-quality teaching.
- EUT will rely heavily on the Office for Project Development and International Collaboration for gaining outside financing in order to widen and professionalise its interdisciplinary research portfolio. By becoming part of international consortiums, research networks, and EU-funded research projects EUT can fulfil a number of goals such as internationalisation, increased academic output and improvement of the academic staff's ability to engage in high-quality research publishable in ranked academic outlets.

3.2 Job description for the position of the Head of Research

The Head of Research (Director of the Centre for Methodology and Research) works closely with Vice Rector for Research and the Research Coordinator, in order to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities.

- a. **The Head of Research** will be in charge of directing and coordinating the activities related to the analysis and development of the university's research activities. The Head of Research is required to bring a wide range of applied research expertise, a good understanding of the research and innovation policies and a consolidated background in national and/or regional project management.

Skills and experience

- Ability to think strategically and to contribute to the strategic direction of the University's research.
- Ability to identify research opportunities and formulate strategic responses.
- Ability to develop effective working relationships with a wide variety of internal/external partners.
- Ability to work under pressure across multiple projects and deadlines, and to prioritise among competing demands.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including presentation skills.
- Adaptable and flexible within a team environment.
- Excellent leadership, organizational, consultation and delegation skills.
- Commitment to working within professional and ethical codes of conduct.
- Ability to combine and integrate the skills and expertise of highly motivated staff into multi-disciplinary teams, developing and building upon existing collaborations as well as creating/facilitating new opportunities.
- Experience in providing research leadership in a university environment.
- A personal research contribution and reputation appropriate to a research lead.
- A working knowledge of appropriate research strategy and policy in relation to Higher Education
- Demonstrated expertise in successfully designing and carrying out quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation processes.
- Experience of managing and supporting multi-partner research projects including projects with external organisations.
- Experience of planning, marketing and delivering events promoting university expertise and services to internal and external audiences.
- Good interpersonal skills and experience of communicating effectively with a wide variety of stakeholders.
- Experience of instilling a research culture and supporting and motivating academics to increase and improve their research output.

- Well-developed understanding of the priorities, operation and strategy of relevant funding bodies as evidenced by a track record of funded research.

b. *The Office of Vice-Rector for Research* is in charge of the following activities:

- control over the implementation of decisions taken by public authorities responsible for higher education, decrees by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Rector's decrees and decisions taken by the Rectorate;
- research of four scientific centres, faculties, and departments;
- organizing events to meet the criteria of a research university;
- cooperation with the National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation, other universities by means of establishing cross-sectoral educational and research divisions;
- planning and implementation of joint research projects by the University researchers and foreign higher education establishments and academic institutions;
- exploring scientific achievements worldwide and their implementation in the University;
- arrangement of training for new researchers;
- scientific work of students;
- research activities at scientific field stations;
- organization of student competitions and research paper contests;
- participation of the University in science and technology fairs;
- implementing scientific developments in industry;
- election and re-election of research fellows and their re-certification;
- material assistance to the learning process and scientific research;
- distribution and use of equipment and materials for scientific work;
- work of specialized academic councils for dissertation presentations;
- holding competitions and exhibitions of research papers and editions;
- occupational safety measures and accident prevention in the course of research activities;
- organization of scientific conferences;
- work of faculty libraries and control over supplying textbooks and methodological literature to the libraries

c. *The Research Coordinator:*

The main tasks of this job position would include:

- coordinates the research centers;
- provides research development and implementation assistance;
- documents and assists in the formulation, review, and amendment of guidelines and policies governing research in the University;
- ensures uniform implementation of policies across university;
- manages research data and handles the retrieval of information in response to the requirement of the research end-users.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS PLAN

Nr.	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE
1	Teaching Methods, Standards and Quality	October-November
2	ASD Junior	October
3	ASD	April
4	Humanities Annuals, Dardha Liberal Meetings, Winter School of Innovation, Public Health Forum, and Spring School of Leadership	During the year
5	Training for Junior Researchers: Publish or perish	May-June
6	Training for Senior Researchers: How to Lead a Research Unit	May-June
7	Methodological Training: Innovative research and teaching	May-June
8	Staff training organized in the framework of national and international projects	Continuous
9	<i>Continuous trainings according to staff needs</i>	Upon demand

4. Action Plan

No	Goals and Objectives	Actions	Timeframe
Priority I: Support research excellence			
1.1	Promote and Develop Research	Promote awareness and the necessary competencies Integrate the impact of research into institutional mechanisms	September – December 2022 January – March 2023
1.2	Develop international cooperation among researchers	Promote and encourage training, mobility and bilateral or multilateral cooperation's	September – December 2022
1.3	Encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between teaching and research	Visibly incorporate research into study and training programmes	September – October 2022 February – March 2023
Priority II: Support research funding growth and diversification			
2.1	Facilitate coordination and research management	Act as a connection unit between different units within EUT	Regular basis
2.2	Provide collaboration between research centers and labor market.	Work closely with key stakeholders to build capacity and capability	September 2022 - ongoing
2.3	Contribute to maximizing competitive funding opportunities	Promote research funding opportunities and research development support services. Develop and maintain strong relationships with major research funders.	Regular basis
Priority III: Support research strategy			
3.1	Enhance performance monitoring and implement potential interventions	Review of the existing mechanisms and tools Recommendations for improvement/upgrade	September – October 2022 November – December 2022
3.2	Provide data and analysis for Research Strategy review	Provide information and reports regarding research outputs and research proposal success Analyse and report on the effectiveness of internal research funding	September – October 2022 (for academic year 2021-2022) January – February 2023
3.3	Support the process of	Develop and co-ordinate campaigns	At least twice a year

	research dissemination	associated with the promotion of EUT researchers and their research	(October; March)
Priority IV: Support a culture of research integrity			
4.1	Enhance engagement among research centers and researchers	Develop policies and procedures to support responsible research practices	September 2022 – March 2023
4.2	Provide Interdisciplinarity and multi profile environment	Coordinate with researchers from different expertise or different Faculties/ Departments Review of the existing research groups	Regular basis September – October 2022
4.3	Encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies	Support and initiate the organization of trainings on innovation and use of new technologies Awareness on improvement of the IT tools used to support R&D	September 2022 February 2023 September – December 2022

References

1. Statute of the European University of Tirana
2. European University of Tirana Strategic Plan 2021-2025
3. European University of Tirana Research Strategy 2021-2025
4. Research Services Framework of Macquaire University